

# Department of Human Services

## Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, August 9, 2007

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Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
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Michigan Car Accident Personal Injury Attorney

## Expert to assess foster care system

### Judge approves move as part of advocacy lawsuit



ABC12/AP

**DETROIT (AP) - - (08/08/07)** -- A federal judge in Detroit has approved the hiring of an expert to help assess Michigan's system for monitoring the care of 19,000 foster children.

Judge Nancy Edmonds is hearing a lawsuit by an advocacy group that says Michigan isn't adequately looking out for the interest of foster children.

She has appointed an expert to study a random sample of 460 Michigan foster care files.

The New York-based group Children's Rights also is seeking documents about foster children who died while under state care.

State welfare officials have withheld information as confidential, and the judge gave them until month's end to turn over some documents.

*You can see the ABC12 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player to view this video. You can get it FREE by clicking here. NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 7-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips may play in a separate window, without audio, on Mac OS X machines. abc12.com is aware of this issue and is working with the video player vendor to correct it as soon as possible. Copyright 2007 ABC Inc., WJRT-TV Inc.*

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Article published Aug 9, 2007  
Police investigating death of 4-year-old  
**Stephanie Antonian Rutherford**  
*The Enquirer*

Police are investigating the suspicious death of a 4-year-old boy, found Monday in his home in the Bedford Hills Mobile Village.

The boy, whose name is not yet released, was found dead early Monday morning by emergency workers responding on a medical call to a residence at 279 Oak Lawn Drive.

The Battle Creek Police Department Crime Lab and detectives are conducting an investigation into the death of the child, which is being considered suspicious.

The death is not being investigated as a homicide, said Battle Creek Police Cmdr. James Saylor, but that possibility has not been ruled out.

Saylor did not comment on how the child died and said the investigation is in its preliminary stages.

A male resident of the home, identified by police as the boyfriend of the child's mother, was taken into custody Tuesday and charged Wednesday on a felony child abuse warrant stemming from a July 30 incident at the residence.

The suspect is being held at the Calhoun County Jail on a \$250,000 bond and is expected to be arraigned in court today.

The suspect has not been arrested in connection with Monday's death, Saylor said. His name was not released, pending arraignment.

"This arrest is based on the July incident, despite what some television stations are reporting," Saylor said. "We have not issued any charges regarding Monday's incident."

Saylor could not confirm that the felony child abuse charge was related to the deceased child.

No more details are being released pending autopsy and pathology results.

*Stephanie Antonian Rutherford can be reached at 966-0665 or [srutherford@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:srutherford@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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## Police: Man Attempted To Lure Child Into Car

POSTED: 4:30 pm EDT August 8, 2007

UPDATED: 5:27 am EDT August 9, 2007

**CANTON TOWNSHIP, Mich.** -- Police said a man attempted to lure a 9-year-old girl into his green-and-beige van on Riverwoods Drive North in Canton Township around 3:30 p.m. Tuesday.

"He told me to come over. He didn't say anything but just went like this. I went into the house and told my mom and she called the police," said Katja Ritter.

A neighbor said she saw the same van a few days earlier. She said she thought he has been casing the street because it's well off the road.

"We don't know what this individual's intentions were, so it's highly suspicious. Normally you don't have a man motioning a 9-year-old girl to car," said Canton Township Police sgt.. Rick Pomorski.

Police described the man as in his 20s-30s, with brown hair and a beard. He was driving a green and beige van.

If you have any information call 800-CRIME STOPPERS.



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Published August 9, 2007

#### House Bill 4162

- For information on House Bill 4162, go to [www.michiganlegislature.org](http://www.michiganlegislature.org).

## Anti-bullying bill stalls in Senate

House passed 'Safe School' law earlier this year

Chris Andrews  
Lansing State Journal

When the state House voted to require schools to adopt bullying policies in March, Kevin Epling of East Lansing hoped the Senate would quickly follow.

More than four months later, Epling still is waiting for action on "Matt's Safe School Law," with legislation stalled in the Senate Education Committee.

"We are coming up on the new school year, and it would have been nice to have something in place," Epling said Wednesday, while taking part in an anti-bullying training program in Delta Township.

Epling has made anti-bullying legislation a personal mission. His 14-year-old son, Matt, killed himself in 2002 after a hazing incident.

Epling was a speaker at a training program sponsored by Michigan's Law Enforcement Bullying Task Force and the Michigan's Safe Schools Initiative. More than 120 police officers and school officials from across the state took part.

They were introduced to a new in-class program that provides police with grade-appropriate tools they can use when bullying problems arise.

Meanwhile, it remains unclear if, or when, the Senate will take up the legislation.

The State Board of Education has drafted a model bullying policy for schools to adopt, but there are no requirements that schools establish that policy or any other.

Legislation sponsored by State Rep. Pam Byrnes, D-Chelsea, passed the House by a 59-50 vote. The legislation has been controversial in part because it requires policies consistent with the State Board of Education model, which lists sexual orientation as one of the actions that can motivate bullying.

Epling said there also is disagreement about whether legislation is needed to address the issue. He believes that it is.

"It is definitely time for the Legislature to step in because the system is broken at this time," he said. The fact that more than 120 police officers signed up for Wednesday's training session, he said, illustrates that police around the state recognize the problem.

Epling said school districts should take action with or without a legislative mandate. He said federal funding is available to pay for anti-bullying programs.

Any preventive program really will not cost school districts additional funding, he said.

State Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, could not be reached for comment.

Byrnes said she thinks it is important to list specific characteristics that can motivate bullying behavior.

"If you have a vague law, it can be ignored," she said.

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or [candrews@lsj.com](mailto:candrews@lsj.com).

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# MORNING SUN

## Clare football coach suspended for season

By SUSAN FIELD  
Clare Managing Editor

A longtime Clare High School teacher and coach has been suspended for the fall semester for violating district policy and the Child Protection Act.

After a sometimes heated and heart-wrenching debate, the Clare Board of Education suspended Kelly Luplow from teaching and coaching without pay, Superintendent Greg McMillan said Wednesday.

Luplow, who is the head varsity football coach and teaches health, weight training and conditioning, and sixth grade physical education, failed to disclose to the Michigan Department of Human Services in May 2006 that a female student told him that she had been sexually assaulted, McMillan said.

Board members made the suspension decision after a 90-minute closed-session meeting Tuesday night, McMillan said.

Having coached since 1982 and been a teacher in the district since 1988, Luplow has a strong network of support, McMillan said.

Supporters of Luplow packed the board room during the open portion of the meeting, but board members felt that they had little choice but to discipline him, McMillan said.

"It was horrible," McMillan said. "Kelly has a lot of support."

School officials learned of the girl telling Luplow of a sexual assault when her mother found out late last spring, the superintendent said.

The girl and her family were good friends of Luplow's family, and the girl asked Luplow not to tell anyone what she had told him at a track meet in May 2006, McMillan said.

In promising to keep the girl's disclosure secret, Luplow violated his oath as a teacher to report to the state any report from a student relating to any type of abuse or neglect, but McMillan said the coach's heart was in the right place and that he thought he was doing the right thing.

McMillan said the girl's statements to Luplow were vague and that he believes Luplow thought she would tell her parents.

McMillan, who counts himself among Luplow's good friends, said that, in the end, the first responsibility of teachers and the district is the students.

After the girl's mother found out about the sexual assault, she contacted Clare Police, who launched an investigation, McMillan said.

Although Luplow was disciplined by the board of education, he will not face criminal charges, the superintendent said.

Luplow was out of town and unavailable for comment Wednesday.

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## Tempus fugit

Thursday, August 09, 2007

We found state Rep. Rick Shaffer's recent press release on his joining the Child Protection Task Force interesting. In it, the Three Rivers Republican states, "During my tenure as (Department of Human Services) subcommittee chair, it was a source of constant frustration that despite all the resources put into children's care, there seemed to be a constant stream of examples where the state had failed either a child or a child's family."

We laud the task force's stated mission: to reform Michigan's foster-care system to make it safer for the children in it.

But we wonder, haven't the Republicans controlled the House and boasted a 50-50 or higher representation in the Senate for a raccoon's age? If the state has been failing to keep children in its care safe, why are they just getting around to worrying about it now?

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Reauthorize health insurance for kids

Thursday, August 09, 2007

Opponents of the reauthorization of a program that provides health care coverage for millions of children of low-income parents warn that the State Children's Health Insurance Program is just another Democratic attempt to take the country one step closer to national health care.

And President Bush has already warned he'll veto the bill if Congress reauthorizes it with a spending increase to cover all eligible children.

But we believe a program to provide health insurance to children who otherwise would not have it is an important investment in the future.

SCHIP -- known in Michigan as MiChild -- has been a godsend to families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but still less than 200 percent of the poverty line. The program insures children and some eligible adults who are unlikely to be able to afford private health insurance and don't have employer-sponsored insurance.

The program has been especially important for states like Michigan, with its stagnant economy and families losing employer-sponsored health insurance. Since it was first authorized in 1997, the number of children in Michigan without health care coverage has actually declined by nearly 27 percent, thanks to SCHIP/MiChild.

Nationally, 1.4 million fewer children are covered by private health insurance than were covered a decade ago, which amounts to about a 5 percent decrease. At the same time, the number of children enrolled in public insurance programs, and that includes Medicaid, has increased 31 percent, largely because of SCHIP.

Some people, worried about "socialized medicine" creeping into the nation's health care system, might see this as a bad thing. But, before reaching that conclusion, they should consider how poor families with no insurance rely on the hospital emergency room as their first stop in health care. Emergency rooms can't turn people away for inability to pay -- but this also is the most expensive route to medical treatment.

In the end, medical costs are driven up for everyone to absorb. That's a major problem with the current health care system.

The SCHIP program will expire Sept. 30.

The U.S. House has passed a reauthorization that would increase spending by \$50 billion over five years -- a level that would cover every eligible child. The version that passed the U.S. Senate last week included an increase of \$35 billion over the next five years.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Senate version would cover 3.2 million children, including 2.7 million who are eligible but have not been enrolled. The House version would cover 4.2 million. Either version would allocate enough money to keep 800,000 children now covered by SCHIP from losing their insurance, The New York Times reported.

In Michigan, about 160,000 children are uninsured -- about two-thirds of whom are eligible for Medicaid or MiChild, but who are not enrolled.

The toll on those uninsured children, their families, the health care system and, eventually, society at large stands to be enormous.

The SCHIP program needs to be reauthorized and, if possible, expanded. Congress and the White House need to see to it.

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**Wayne Co. juvenile hall's license restored**

August 9, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility, whose license to operate was in jeopardy after juvenile residents assaulted staff and other residents on numerous occasions, is back on track, county officials said Wednesday.

Sharon Banks, spokeswoman for county Executive Robert Ficano, said the 9-year-old facility in downtown Detroit had been returned to regular license status by the state's Office of Children and Adult Licensing.

**Advertisement**

After last week's review, the office said the facility is operating in nearly flawless fashion and has been returned to regular status. It lost that status in July 2006 and has had two provisional licenses.

Had the review gone badly, a third provisional license could have jeopardized funding.

*By Jack Kresnak***Find this article at:**<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070809/NEWS02/708090390/1004>☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

## Child support sweep planned for Macomb County

August 8, 2007

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

People owing money for child support have less than a month to settle up before they run the risk of having Macomb County sheriff's deputies knock on their doors.

The sheriff's office is planning a three-day sweep to arrest people with outstanding warrants for owing child support past the due date.

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Officials aren't saying over which three days the sweep will occur. County spokesman Phil Frame said the violators are getting a heads-up to give them a chance to pay off the debts before they're arrested.

Those owing money should pay it off at the county's Friend of the Court, located at 40 N. Main in Mt. Clemens.

"Anyone who doesn't take care of this responsibility should expect a knock on their door sometime in September," Sheriff Mark Hackel said in a news release today.

More than 100 people were arrested during a similar sweep in December, officials said.

Amber Hunt

Reporter

Detroit Free Press

313-222-2708

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## Sheriff to track down deadbeat parents

Hunting and fishing licenses will be denied to those who don't pay child support

By Christy Strawser  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Freedom could be fleeting for anyone with unpaid child support as the Macomb County Sheriff's Office gears up to arrest deadbeat parents -- and pull their hunting licenses.

Sheriff's deputies are teaming up with Friend of the Court to locate parents with outstanding warrants over child support and nab them during a warrant sweep next month. Parents face up to 90 days in jail if they're arrested.

The court is also working with the Department of Natural Resources to revoke hunting licenses for non-paying parents, which would prohibit offenders from hunting, fishing and driving all-terrain vehicles.

"It's surprising, but we get more of a reaction to this than to (revoking) driver licenses," said Tom Blohm, enforcement division director of Macomb County Friend of the Court.

Macomb County has 2,500 outstanding warrants for parents in arrears on their payment schedule, Blohm said. Bench warrants are issued after a parent fails to pay and then does not appear in court for a scheduled hearing, Blohm said.

Sheriff's deputies plan to arrest offenders in the tri-county area and they're announcing it now to give parents a few weeks to straighten the matter out before the cops come knocking on the door. The sweep will run 24 hours a day for three days in September, deputies said.

"We always have hope that they will come around and start working with us," Blohm said. "Our goal is to get these individuals to come in and work something out instead of getting arrested."

Blohm said parents who are not in compliance with their payment order can avoid arrest by stopping by the courthouse in downtown Mount Clemens during business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, bringing some good faith money, and pleading their case.

"You have to come in with a reasonable payment based on current circumstances and really communicate," Blohm said. "Our biggest issue is that people don't communicate. You don't have to have a lot of money to show up and communicate. We don't want people to be arrested, we want people to pay their support so the money can go back to the families."

The sweep is timed to coincide with the start of school, when kids need money for supplies, and near the arrival of hunting season, Blohm said.

"Our goal is not to create a more difficult situation, but if you have a DNR license it's indicative you have the ability to buy a gun, an ATV, and that tells us you have some income that you're not using the right way," Blohm said.

A similar sweep in December brought 100 arrests and \$300,000 in back child support, Blohm said, adding unemployment is not an excuse for falling behind in child support.

"When we have individuals who are unemployed, we will help them temporarily reduce their

child support payment," Blohm said. "The whole point is to tell people that we are here and willing to work with you."

Sheriff's deputies, though, will be less willing to listen.

"Anyone who doesn't take care of this responsibility should expect a knock on their door sometime in September," Sheriff Mark Hackel said.

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# Women work to end 'hidden' homelessness

Wed, Aug 8, 2007

BY BRITTANY CLEMENT  
[news@grandhaventribune.com](mailto:news@grandhaventribune.com)

There's a silent homelessness in the Tri-Cities area, and two local women are trying to raise awareness about it and eradicate it through transitional housing programs.



Karen Reenders is director of the People Center in Spring Lake, while Jane Anderson is the housing case manager at the Salvation Army in Grand Haven. Both provide affordable transitional housing to those with ties to the Tri-Cities struggling to stay afloat.

Reenders said she received 18 applications in the month of July, with Anderson receiving 15 phone calls. Both said the number of people in need of such services is probably higher than most in the community would expect.

"Homelessness in this area is different than in Detroit, New York or any other big city — it's hidden," Reenders said. "It's people living in people's

basements. It's people living in their camper because they don't have anywhere else to go."

Anderson said homelessness may also be difficult to spot because of the belief that the area is a stereotypical suburbia.

"Because Grand Haven is impressed with our image, predominantly upper-middle class, I'm not certain if we really recognize the population that's falling through the cracks," she said.

The People Center, 225 E. Exchange St. in Spring Lake, offers shelter for up to six months to single people, families and couples with six transitional apartments. Reenders said her clients must be enrolled in financial management classes and must meet with her every other week.

The apartments and all utilities are paid for by the People Center, so those staying there can save up enough money for their own housing, Reenders said.

"A majority of my clients don't have any family or friend support, and also have some sort of financial disaster," she said. "We want to help those people to sustain independent living."

Reenders said to help achieve this mindset in her clients, she often has to use tough love.

"I'm very to-the-point with my families and I think I go further faster with that," she said.

Even with only six months to work with her clients, Reenders said her approach leads to success.

"They all leave the People Center and go somewhere," she said. "A lot of clients come back and pop in to tell me how they're doing."

Anderson has also had her share of success with the local Salvation Army's transitional housing program.



The Salvation Army offers two types of housing — a no-cost emergency shelter for up to three months, and affordable transitional housing for up to two years for single-parent or two-parent families with children.

Anderson said she provides case management — which includes money management, planning for future housing and family counseling — for both housing programs.

"The key for success of individuals is case management — being mentored and nurtured when change is taking place," she said.

Anderson said she can take up to seven families at one time in five housing units, all located near the Salvation Army headquarters at 310 N. Despelder St. in Grand Haven. She said one of the best parts of the program is the neighborly atmosphere that the families themselves build throughout their time there.

"It's a community feeling," she said. "Families set standards and curfews, and they all look out for one another."

To Anderson, these bonds are crucial for positive outcomes.

"If you lack support in your life, then your chance of success has lessened," she said.

Anderson said she rarely has cases that fail, with most going on to get jobs and houses of their own. She said one single mother with two kids was able to secure employment, save \$4,000 and remove her debt within nine months.

"Sometimes without our help, that's not going to happen," Reenders said.

Both Anderson and Reenders said community awareness would go a long way in curbing homelessness in the Tri-Cities.

Reenders said the Northwest Ottawa Area Housing Coalition is putting together a plan to ensure townships put affordable housing in their master plans.

Anderson is the chairwoman of the housing coalition, and said she would like to focus on educating the area about making affordable housing a feasible option.

"My desire would be for the community to understand how valuable they are — that their concern does change lives," she said. "Until our area recognizes there are housing issues we could work on, it's a dream. We would like it to become a reality."

# Send extra produce to those in need

Posted by [Jackson Citizen Patriot](#) August 09, 2007 10:00AM

Categories: [Voice of the People](#)

BROOKLYN -- On July 9, I saw a nice article about the Grand River Market. Next to it was an article that donations to local food banks were down this time of year.

I don't know whether the placement was intentional, but it struck me that it's harvest season in Michigan and people are going hungry. I called the Interfaith Shelter, figuring they would be overrun with excess zucchini and other vegetables. They were not.

I vendor at a market in Marshall, and we have always donated unsold produce at the end of the market. I asked the shelter if they could use it, and they said they could. I contacted a Grand River Market vendor, which hopefully will do the same.

Maybe all local gardeners with excess produce could donate to the food bank. At least local folks won't go hungry, and your hard work in the garden won't go to waste. Just a thought.

-- *Lisa Brown*

JEFF GERRITT

## **Young lives rescripted**

**Program helps minority men rewrite their future**

August 9, 2007

Orlando Hicks beat some tough odds. With the right help, so can others like him.

A young African-American man with a prison record -- two years for assault and felony firearms -- Hicks' chances of getting a job good enough to keep him off the streets were slim. But today, Hicks earns more than \$17 an hour as an apprentice pipe fitter. In a few years, he hopes to become a journeyman, making more than \$35 an hour. Some day, he wants to own a business.

### **Advertisement**

Hicks, 31, graduated last year from Detroit's Flip the Script program. It gave him the direction, skills, self-confidence and contacts he needed to move forward.

Hicks did the rest.

"It feels good to earn legal and decent money and not have to worry about what's behind you," Hicks said last week, speaking to the 25 men who make up this summer's Flip the Script class at Goodwill Industries of Greater Detroit.

In the last four years, almost 400 young minority men like Hicks have graduated from Flip the Script, and nearly 80% have found and kept jobs. That's remarkable in today's economy, especially when a third of the graduates face the added barrier of being ex-offenders. Many have gone into the skilled trades. Others have entered two- and four-year colleges. One graduate is a mortgage broker. Another directs a Head Start program.

The 16-week Flip the Script program, which started in 2003, helps low-income minority males in Wayne County, ages 18-30, strengthen math and job skills, find employment, manage money and develop self-respect and purpose. Other Goodwill's, nonprofits and government agencies around the nation, including Miami, Washington, D.C., Seattle and Orlando, have taken notice and plan to duplicate the Detroit program as early as next year.

### **Effort and dedication required**

Flip the Script is no easy ride. About half of those who start don't finish. Punctuality, attendance and teamwork are mandatory. Long-term goals must become more important than "now money." The men are told to look in the mirror and stop pointing fingers. Those who stick with it find a family and a future.

The men work 16-20 hours a week at transitional jobs in Goodwill's industrial work center at 3111 Grand River. Doing light packing and assembly, they earn minimum

wage as well as a valuable job reference.

They also spend 10 days in construction zone work stations, getting hands-on experience in skilled trades such as electricity, plumbing and carpentry. The work stations, made by Questech Inc. of Farmington Hills, will become part of Flip the Script's national model, said company president George Emanoil.

Credit much of Flip the Script's success to its program manager, Keith Bennett, 51, a former college basketball coach who designed the program. Bennett doesn't mind saying or hearing things that make people uncomfortable. He loves the young African-American men he works with too much -- and understands the obstacles they face too well -- to sugarcoat.

He'll tell anyone that students are graduating from Detroit Public Schools with third-grade math skills. If you don't believe it, he'll tell you to talk to the kids. And when he wanted to know why businesses weren't hiring young black men, he asked the employers. When they told him that some workers lacked social skills, didn't show up on time or were incorrigible, he didn't argue. He decided to do something about it.

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=JEFF+GERRITT%3A+Young+lives+rescrip...> 8/9/2007

Through his program, Bennett exposes young men, in discussion groups and dinners, to successful adults who can show how discipline, self-respect and respect for others pay off.

"We're looking for these young men to make a life change," Bennett told me. "We want them to become positive citizens, good parents and husbands. It's really a spiritual change, and a change in attitude that we want in 16 weeks."

### Something positive

Initially funded by the Thompson Foundation, Flip the Script now gets its \$370,000-a-year budget from other private foundations. With waiting lists that have exceeded 200, the program has gained street credibility through its graduates. "We don't have to do any advertising," Bennett said. "If we had the funding, we could serve another 125-150 people."

"These are some really good guys. Some have made some bad mistakes. Most of them have been abused and neglected as children and young men. They're products of their environment with a strong desire to overcome."

Shared experiences and backgrounds become a bond and source of strength.

"It has to be us helping us, as opposed to people who don't understand us," said Melvern Johnson, 28, who served almost nine years in prison for unarmed robbery and is now on parole. He'll graduate from Flip the Script this month and start classes at Wayne State University in fall. "Flip the Script has been a refuge, a place of solace. Being part of something positive like this restores your humanity," he said.

Jibreel Kareem, 30, on parole after serving 10 years for assault, will also attend Wayne State this fall. He learned how to enroll after meeting a college representative through the program.

"I had a lot of hope in me, but I didn't know where to start," Kareem told me. "In the program, they have connections and they bring people here. Then it's all about you. We messed up, most of us. But that can't be the definition of who we are."

Dominick Bolden, 29, who served 12 years for armed robbery, graduated from Flip the Script in May. He's now enrolled at Wayne State University and working a production job at DTE. He also works as a fitness trainer. Bolden said Flip the Script taught him the importance of etiquette and respect, and paid for his prescription glasses.

"They show genuine concern," he said.

### A real life-changer

Over the years, I've seen too many talented young men like these locked up. The costs to society are enormous, but the right help at the right time could keep many from prison, or from going back.

Nationally, 70% of the 650,000 people released from jails and prisons each year commit new crimes and go back. I don't think that will happen to Bolden, Kareem, Hicks and Johnson.

Hicks is working and paying taxes now, instead of costing taxpayers more than \$30,000 a year in prison. He's also serving as a role model to his community. Someday, he'll be able to hire other young men like himself and give them a second chance.

Programs like Flip the Script that turn lives around are invaluable.

We need more of them -- and more people like Bennett, who, instead of fearing these young men, see their potential for good.

**JEFF GERRITT** is a Free Press editorial writer. Contact him at [gerritt@freepress.com](mailto:gerritt@freepress.com) or 313-222-6585.

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Published August 9, 2007

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## Tax credit: Republicans shouldn't blame poor for budget mess

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Michigan has to make some tough decisions on spending and taxes in coming weeks. Tough decisions, not punitive ones.

So, Republicans in control of the Michigan Senate would be well-advised to dump Senate Bill 662 by Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi.

SB 662 would halt the state's earned income tax credit - which sends money back to Michigan's poorest families - until the state's reserve fund topped \$250 million.

Now, before you start thinking, "We might not be in such deficits if we didn't hand money to people," consider that the tax credit doesn't even start until the 2008 tax year - the future.

Creating the earned income tax credit has had nothing to do with Michigan's fiscal collapse. Cassis and her fellow Republicans in the Legislature can't make that claim, though.

In the 2000 fiscal year, Michigan had \$1.26 billion in its reserve fund. By the 2003 fiscal year, though, the fund balance was 0. It hasn't even come within light years of the \$250 million mark since.

During that time, the economy peaked and plunged. But the Legislature firmly under Republican control teamed up with then-Gov. John Engler to enact a series of tax cuts, too.

These tax cuts greatly curtailed state revenue. A Citizens Research Council review of tax changes in this period reports that these changes reduced general fund revenue by \$2 billion per year.

So, to prop up state spending, the Republican Legislature drained the reserves dry.

Now, the state faces continual deficits - the 2008 figure is \$1.8 billion - and has no reserves to call upon.

Enter Cassis, who says the earned income tax credit has to wait because, "It would be premature to create another hole with this credit and then have to raise taxes by that much more to pay for it" - as she told the Detroit News last month.

The credit is expected to dole out \$130 million in its first year, with payments reaching \$200 million a year later. A two-child family would qualify for a credit of \$4,536 by earning no more than \$36,347 a year, the News reports.

The Michigan Catholic Conference is a big supporter of the credit as an aid to the poor. In a letter to lawmakers opposing any halt, the conference makes an important linkage:

"Michigan's Earned Income Tax Credit was passed last year in good faith by an overwhelming bipartisan majority ... At that time, the outlook for this year's budget difficulties was certainly foreseeable. Senate Bill 662 ... essentially calls for a permanent halt to the tax credit as the realization of a \$250 million rainy day fund does not seem realistic now or in the coming years."

Michigan's budget troubles are not new, yet Cassis and other lawmakers supported the credit in 2006. Now, suddenly, it's not affordable?

Cassis should drop this punitive bill and use her time for more productive pursuits for all the people of Michigan.

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## Give jobs to out-of-work Americans instead of Iraqi refugees

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Thursday, August 09, 2007

**Journal Reader**

Americans have put in long, hard hours at jobs. Those jobs aren't here anymore. Jobs have left our state and gone to another country. Hours have been cut. Some Americans have two or three jobs to make ends meet. People are losing their homes that they have worked long, hard hours to buy. There is no more work for us hard-working people.

Where are the jobs? They are giving them to Iraqi refugees who didn't pound the pavement to look for them.

Don't make it sound like Americans in our great state of Michigan and the United States of America are lazy. Give us the jobs before you give them to foreigners.

Jerri Irons

Grand Blanc Township

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